

*Urges Federal Assistance for Fisheries Harmed By Oil Rig Disaster*  
April 29, 2010

WASHINGTON D.C. – Congressman Charlie Melancon (LA-03) today wrote federal administrators urging them to prepare to direct disaster funding to Louisiana's commercial and recreational fishermen. In his letter to the head of NOAA's Fisheries Service and the Secretary of Commerce, Congressman Melancon noted that the oil intrusion resulting from the Deepwater Horizon oil rig disaster would likely damage the fragile habitats that Louisiana's fishermen, oystermen, and shrimpers depend on.

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In his letter, Congressman Melancon wrote, **"As repeated efforts to close the open well head at the Deepwater Horizon disaster site have failed, I urge you to prepare to direct disaster funding for the commercial and recreational fisheries industries in South Louisiana. Many of our fisheries and oyster beds are slated to open in the coming days and weeks. This hazardous oil intrusion will almost certainly have a detrimental impact on the fragile ecosystems that our seafood industry relies on."**

Congressman Melancon concluded, **"Every effort must be made – and made quickly -- to restrain the growing environmental and economic disaster off the coast of my state. But following these exhaustive efforts, it is imperative that we quickly enact all appropriate disaster funding for Louisiana's fisherman, oystermen and shrimpers."**

Earlier today, Congressman Melancon returned to Louisiana from Washington to help coordinate the emergency response efforts. He traveled to Plaquemines Parish to meet with local officials and make sure they have the resources they need to prevent further damage to Louisiana's fragile coastline.

The Deepwater Horizon platform was located 50 miles off the coast of Venice, which is in Louisiana's Third Congressional District.

Yesterday, Congressman Melancon requested an immediate Secretary-level review of the current response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster. In a letter to U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, Congressman Melancon urged the secretaries to evaluate how the containment and clean-up efforts could be accelerated in order to minimize damage to Louisiana's fragile coastline and fishing grounds.

Congressman Melancon will be touring the disaster site tomorrow with Secretary Napolitano, Secretary Salazar, and EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson.

The full text of Congressman Melancon's letter to NOAA's Fisheries Service is copied below. A signed final copy can be viewed online [here](#).

April 29, 2010  
Eric C. Schwaab  
Assistant Administrator  
NOAA Fisheries Service  
1315 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Assistant Administrator Schwaab,

As repeated efforts to close the open well head at the Deepwater Horizon disaster site have failed, I urge you to prepare to direct disaster funding for the commercial and recreational fisheries industries in South Louisiana. Many of our fisheries and oyster beds are slated to open in the coming days and weeks. This hazardous oil intrusion will almost certainly have a detrimental impact on the fragile ecosystems that our seafood industry relies on.

As you know, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the Department of Commerce have authority under the Interjurisdictional Fisheries Act (16 U.S.C. § 4107) and the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (16 U.S.C § 1861) to provide assistance to fishing communities affected by a disaster. NMFS will play a key role in designating this accident as a disaster and allocating funding to Louisiana and our fisheries. I will work in Congress to be sure the appropriate funds are available to draw down.

Every effort must be made – and made quickly -- to restrain the growing environmental and economic disaster off the coast of my state. But following these exhaustive efforts, it is imperative that we quickly enact all appropriate disaster funding for Louisiana's fisherman, oystermen and shrimpers.

Sincerely,

Charlie Melancon  
Member of Congress

cc: U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke

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